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April 28, 1999

Dockets Management Branch (HFA-305) Food and Drug Administration 5630 Fishers Lane, Room 1061 Rockville, MD 20852.

Regarding Docket # 98N-1038, "Irradiation in the Production, Processing, and Handling of Food

Dear Sir or Madam:

I understand that the matter of labeling of irradiated food is under review. Please consider this letter my respectful demand that conspicuous labeling of irradiated foods—both as ingredients and end products—be strictly required on all affected food products.

I am a well educated consumer much concerned by techniques that extend shelf life and appearance while compromising the high quality of foodstuffs. All technologies of our modern world have trade-offs and dangers, which we undertake when we have judged the risks to be worth the rewards. We make wise decisions based upon information, our personal situation and value system. If you allow inadequate labels, you break my ability to make an informed decision.

Frankly, such a prospect makes my blood boil. I am willing to be convinced by the proponents of irradiation that the technique produces a healthful product. I am willing to be convinced with solid, independently funded scientific evidence gathered over the long term, completely and truthfully represented. The evidence I've read to date is mixed. Irradiation may itself be "safe" but it masks other deficient food production practices. Consequently I have not yet been convinced of the validity of its use, and make my purchase decisions accordingly. The prospect of agribusiness interests twiddling government rules in order to foist on me a product I would not otherwise buy angers me to no end.

As public servants your duty is to protect the health and well being of the public, or at the very least to empower individuals to manage their lives to their own level of comfort. While food producers are part of the public, my ability to decide what I do and do not put in my body rates higher than their bottom line. For this reason I demand explicit and conspicuous labels.

I expect your help in this matter.

Darriel Sackett

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